

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Governor Chet Culver ★ Lt. Governor Patty Judge

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GOVERNOR CULVER ANNOUNCES EXPANDED ASSISTANCE TO ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN

(DES MOINES) Iowa Governor Chet Culver today said the Iowa Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program will be expanding into 31 Iowa counties during the coming months making CASA available in all 99 counties. "The expansion of the CASA program will provide even greater assistance to and protection for abused and neglected children in Iowa," Governor Culver said. The CASA program is made up of trained community volunteers who are assigned by a judge to monitor and represent the best interests of a child under the Court's jurisdiction due to abuse or neglect.

The court appointed special advocates get to know the child to whom they are assigned; as well as the child's parents, service providers, teachers, child welfare system officials and others; and, they are required to regularly inform the judge about the child's needs and how their needs are being met. Iowa's Supreme Court Chief Justice Marsha Ternus recently said *"CASA volunteers, who are themselves extraordinary public servants, provide the court with in-depth information about a child. They serve as an extra set of eyes and ears for the judge."*

Governor Culver and Chief Justice Ternus both called upon the Iowa General Assembly last session to provide additional funds to increase the number of children served by the CASA program. The General Assembly answered with a \$411,000 appropriation for the expansion effort. Said the Governor, *"It's great to see everyone agreeing on the benefits of recruiting, training and supporting more CASAs. We can all take pride in the dedication of Iowans willing to volunteer their time and energy to help our courts and child welfare system do the best we can for abused and neglected kids"*.

The Iowa Child Advocacy Board (ICAB), a nine-member board appointed by the Governor, oversees the CASA program and has long been working for statewide CASA availability. According to Lionel Foster, Board Chairperson, *"The CASA's goal is to see that the child is always in a safe, nurturing place and that everyone is working together*

to resolve problems and achieve permanency for the child. This needs to be one of all of our primary goals everywhere in the State.”

First Lady Mari Culver, also a children’s advocate who has focused on services to at-risk youth, praised expansion of the CASA program. “The Governor and I are committed to giving abused and neglected children in Iowa a refuge from violence and abuse,” said Mrs. Culver. “The best interests of the child must be paramount.”

Thirty-one counties (listed below) will benefit from this new assistance for their most vulnerable children. Other counties also will see an increase in the number of CASA volunteers available in their area as a result of this statewide expansion effort.

Counties targeted for the expansion of the CASA program

Adams	Jasper
Audubon	Kossuth
Boone	Montgomery
Calhoun	Monroe
Carroll	O’Brien
Clayton	Osceola
Dickinson	Page
Emmett	Palo Alto
Fayette	Pocahontas
Franklin	Ringgold
Greene	Sac
Guthrie	Taylor
Howard	Wayne
Humboldt	Webster
Iowa	Winneshiek
	Wright

For more information about the CASA program, its expansion or to find out how to become a Court Appointed Special Advocate anywhere in the state, contact the Iowa Child Advocacy Board at 866-448-4608 or email at cab@dia.iowa.gov.

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